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Issued under the authority of
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Fort Chambly originated in the 17th century when the Crown Colony of New France was trying to subdue the five nations of the Iroquois confederacy.

In 1665 French troops were sent to Canada to protect the settlers along the St. Lawrence River and to engage in a campaign against the Mohawks, who controlled what is now northern New York State and the lower reaches of the Richelieu River.

To prepare for an attack on the Mohawks, three forts were built at portages on the Richelieu. One of these was Fort St. Louis, built between mid-August and late fall of 1665 by Jacques de Chambly, a company commander of the Carignan Regiment. The fort, which became known as Chambly after its builder and first commandant, was built of palisades 15 feet high with redans in three of the walls. Its 144-foot-long walls formed a square which enclosed a barracks, a chapel, a house in which de Chambly lived and used as his headquarters, and a storehouse for food, arms and munitions.

Although the presence of the fort was a mild deterrent to Indians who up to that time had been able to ascend the Richelieu to the St. Lawrence unchecked, the first Fort Chambly functioned more as a checkpoint against the smuggling of furs out of New France to the more profitable English markets at Boston and Fort Orange, now Albany, N.Y.

After de Chambly left the post in 1673 to become governor of Acadia the fort was either ungarrisoned or so lightly defended that bands of Indians could bypass it easily and strike at settlements on the St. Lawrence. The fort was so isolated that a dog was used to carry messages between Chambly and La Prairie. In 1691, and again in 1693, Fort Chambly was used as a base from which English attacks on La Prairie could be distracted or broken up but it was not until a large-scale English attack on Montreal was threatened that the fort was adequately garrisoned.

When the war with the English ended in 1697 and a peace was reached with the Iroquois in 1701, Fort Chambly's garrison remained to maintain order and stop smuggling. In 1702 the fort was destroyed by an accidental fire which took the life of a Recollet missionary, Father Benjamin Delorme. It was rebuilt on a smaller scale shortly after.

Re-engagement with the English after 1702 led to the building of a stronger fort that would withstand attacks by European-trained troops with artillery. In 1709-11, a new fort with 45-foot-high walls of stone five feet thick was built and named Fort Pontchartrain de Chambly. Although not proof against bombardment by heavy cannon, the fort was considered strong enough to intimidate any attacker short of a siege force and to serve as a supply base.

During the Seven Years War, Fort Chambly and the fort at St. Jean, which had been built in 1748, were used mainly as supply depots and assembly points. In 1760 Chambly was surrendered to an English force, a week before the French army at Montreal capitulated and New France became part of British North America. No resistance was offered by the 70-odd French soldiers of the garrison.

Fifteen years later, when an American army moved toward Montreal, Fort Chambly was garrisoned by eight officers and 73 men, three which were artillermen whose duty was the manning of the two small guns in the fort. A number of the inhabitants of Chambly, never happy under British rule, joined the Americans and on October 16th, when the siege of Fort Chambly started, 40 or 50 Chambly men were included in the Canadian unit of 300 and a former Chambly merchant, James Livingstone, commanded the American camp at St. Mathias, east of Chambly.

It was supplies of powder, food, arms and munitions that attracted the American attack on Fort Chambly. Fort St. John was stronger and better defended than Chambly and the Americans needed more supplies before they could besiege it.

On the second day of the siege, when the invaders' cannon breached the walls, Major Stopford surrendered, turning over to the enemy 98 barrels of provisions, 134 pounds of powder, three mortars, 83 muskets and 150 French arms and a large stock of shot, cartridges, shells and hand grenades.

In the summer of 1776, the Americans, falling back from Quebec before fresh British reinforcements, stopped briefly at Chambly. Their general officer, John Thomas, died here of smallpox on June 2nd and on June 17th his successor, General John Sullivan, ordered the evacuation of the fort. Fort Chambly was set on fire but was repaired and strengthened when the British troops re-occupied it. Apparently only the wooden floors and the ceilings of the fort were destroyed in the fire for the plan in 1800 was essentially the same as in 1750.

In the War of 1812, Fort Chambly was a military base. The fort itself was used as a barracks, a stores depot, and a magazine but the greater part of the large military camp was located outside the walls. About 32 buildings were completed by 1815 for infantry, cavalry, artillery and commissariat.

Fort Chambly remained as a British army station until 1843 when the Royal Engineers recommended that it be closed down. Troops quartered at the fort were gradually withdrawn until, in 1854, the fort was abandoned. In 1856 the fort was transferred to the Canadian Government and in 1876 all the surviving buildings outside the fort were sold by public auction.

In 1882 the federal government undertook the partial reconstruction of the work, appointing J. O. Dion, of Chambly, as director of the project. This work, completed in 1883, included the engraving of the names of French commandants of the fort and of heroes of New France around the entrance gate. In 1921 Fort Chambly became a National Historic Park.

Single copies of this leaflet are available from the Superintendent, Fort Chambly National Historic Park, Chambly, Quebec, or the Director, Natural and Historic Resources Branch, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa.



ROGER DUHAMEL, F.R.S.C.
QUEEN'S PRINTER AND CONTROLLER OF STATIONERY
OTTAWA, 1966